

# AYURVEDA – the science of the knowledge of life

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Ayurved is not only an ancient Indian Medical science but it is a science which gives **integral knowledge** about life itself. The **uniqueness** of Ayurveda is that it sets value on **both, physical and mental health**. It is a science which describes what is beneficial and what is harmful for life, what is a happy and an unhappy life and also the proper course of life. It gives directions for the life-style how to achieve and maintain a supreme quality of physical, mental and spiritual health.

## What is life?

In old Vedic texts is given the following definition of life (Ayu): It is the **constant** and **continuous union** and **conjunction** of Sharir (body), Indriya (senses), Satva (mind), and Atma (soul)

## What is the scope of Ayurveda?

### **Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshana Aaturasya Vikara Prakshamanam**

The scope is to maintain the health of the healthy (physically and mentally) and to cure those who are affected with disease. According to Ayurveda a healthy person always is defined as being healthy physically as well as mentally!

## What does it mean to be physically healthy?

Physically healthy is a person whose Doshas (humors) – Vata, Pitta, Kapha are in equilibrium, whose Agni (digestive power) is in equilibrium, whose Dhatus (tissues) are functioning normally, i. e. Rasa (body fluid), Rakta (blood), Mansa (muscles), Meda (fat), Asthi (bones), Majja (bone marrow), Shukra (generative tissue), and whose Malas (waste products) are in balance: i. e. Mutra (urine), Purisha (stool), Sweda (sweat)

## What does it mean to be mentally healthy?

Mentally healthy is a person whose Atma (soul), Indriya (senses) and Manas (mind) are balanced and feeling well.

This definition of health was given by **Sushruta**, the great surgeon and healer. He is the author of one of the greatest Vedic opus. It has also been mentioned in Ayurvedic texts that those who observe healthy nourishment and healthy activities in their daily life, who discriminate the good & bad of everything and abide by a moral conduct, become free from disease.

Ayurveda always treats a human as a whole, taking into consideration body & mind. So while treating the patient an Ayurvedic physician always takes note of the aggravation of Doshas, damaged tissues, environmental influences, strength & constitution of the patient, digestive power & psychological factors.

### What kinds of tools do we have for maintaining physical health?

We shall follow a daily routine (**Dinacharya**) as well as a seasonal routine (**Rutucharya**) including seasonal Panchakarma, a balanced diet, the eliminating of natural urges on appropriate time, the rules about sleep, the rules about celibacy, the regular use of rejuvenation treatment and an aphrodisiac treatment.

### What kinds of tools do we have for of maintaining mental health?

We maintain our mental health by following **Sadvrutta** (ethical conduct) and **Dharaniya Vega Dharana** (controlling emotional urges like anger, fear, greed).

### What kinds of tools do we have for curing diseases?

To cure physical diseases Ayurveda uses palliative treatments, eliminating treatments and rejuvenation treatments.

For curing mental diseases Ayurveda advises the worshipping of God, the chanting of Mantras-Hymns and counselling.

### **Rejuvenation Therapies (Rasayana)**

For physical health is suggested the regular use of rejuvenation medicines like milk, ghee, Shatavari (asparagus), Guduchi (tinospora cordifolia), Chayavanaprash.

For mental health the following measures are suggested: an ethical code of conduct like keeping purity of mind, offering of donations, serving old people, relatives, teachers and worshipping God.

The benefit which can be gained from a rejuvenation therapy is longevity, good memory, intelligence, healthy life, youthful age, excellence of lustre, complexion, voice, optimum strength of physical body and sense organs, successful words, respectability and brilliance.

### **Vajikarana (Aphrodisiac Treatment)**

The aim of Vajikarana Treatment is to get physically and mentally healthy offspring and performing sexual intercourse without any pain or interruption.

### **The 3 Pillars of the body - Ahara (Diet), Nidra (Sleep) & Brahmacharya (Celibacy)**

#### Ahara

As food is the basis of all living beings, Ayurveda emphasizes proper dietary habits that further strength, complexion and vitality.

#### Nidra

Nidra (Sleep) gives rest to the body and enhances the growth of the tissues. It is decisive for happiness and unhappiness, nourishment and emaciation, strength and debility, sexual power and impotency, knowledge and ignorance.

### Brahamcharya

Celibacy is the third pillar of the body. Brahmacharya or Celibacy, is a topic which is not much discussed and often misunderstood.

Most people think that Brahmacharya or celibacy means abstinence from physical relationship. This statement seems very stern and unrealistic compared with reality. Ayurved defines this term with much deeper view. Brahmacharya is composed of two words, 'Brahma' & 'Charya'. Brahma is highest knowledge, Charya is behaviour. Brahma also means 'Tapas' which means dedicated devotion.

**Brahmacharyashram, Gruhasthashram, Vanaprasthashram and Sanyasashram** are the four phases of human life. The concept of Brahmacharya passes through these phases with varying characteristics.

In Brahmacharyashram – 'Brahmacharya' means dedication towards acquiring knowledge. This education or knowledge that is required to attain future means, as there is: a job, business, trade etc., needs to be pursued during this period, therefore here abstinence from any other distractions is defined as Brahmacharya. During Brahmacharyashram, a student life, one has to totally abstain from all temptations.

In 'Gruhasthashram' marriage and family life is expected. Gruhasthashram is the phase where the state of Brahmacharya is maintained in another aspect. The person is at his/her prime age. The physical desires are high. Here the definition allows a physical relation with the spouse and keeping abstinence from other females/males. Antenatal & Postnatal care is nicely given for painless labour and a healthy offspring.

### **Pancha Karma a Speciality of Ayurveda**

Pancha Karma is one of the special therapies in Ayurveda. It includes Vamana (emesis), Virechana (purgation), Nasya (nasal application of medicated drops), Basti (enema) and Raktamokshana (bloodletting). Properly undertaken Pancha Karma (purificatory therapy) enhances the clarity of the mind, strength of the sense organs, stability of the tissues and a good digestive power.

### **Ayurveda & its Global Status**

In the last few years, interest in alternative therapy, especially Ayurveda has very much increased, not only in India but also all over the world. Limitations of effective treatment in chronic & psychosomatic disorders & the undue side effects of modern Medicines are the major reasons that have caused this changing attitude. Modern Medicine treats the 'symptoms' or a cause revealed by investigations, where as the Ayurvedic Medicine treats the patient as a whole with psychosomatic approach.

Therefore, 'Ayurveda' the science that has been neglected for many years is going to regain its old glory of ancient times. Many scientists and researchers all over the world

started to take interest in understanding this science. The international organisations such as WHO and UNESCO have increased their faith in alternative therapies like Ayurveda.

Ayurveda believes that life is a continuous & constant union of Body, Senses, Mind & Soul. According to Ayurveda physical & mental health are interdependent. This psychosomatic and holistic approach is unique. Hence it describes Dinacharya (daily regimen) & Rutucharya (seasonal regimen) with respect to the Doshas for maintenance of physical health. It also gives guidelines for Sadvrutta (ethical conduct) to keep mental health. So we can conclude that persons desirous for a long & healthy life should repose utmost faith in the teachings of Ayurveda.